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TENNCARE ENROLLEES GET 'SECOND CHANCE'

Nashville, TN – Some Tennesseans who say they were eligible for TennCare but lost coverage will be given a second chance to reapply through the Department of Human Services.

Specifically, TennCare enrollees who lost coverage because the state did not hear from them on time during a sweeping "reverification" process last year will be given one year—until March 31, 2004—to reapply. This "grace period" is being extended immediately to about 120,400 people who lost TennCare coverage last year for not responding to letters from the state, and another 46,200 now being terminated for the same reason.

Only those who demonstrate eligibility will be readmitted to the program. Others will have to find different healthcare coverage.

Governor Phil Bredesen said that while holding down costs in TennCare is a high priority, he wants to ensure that former TennCare enrollees are given every opportunity to make the case for continued coverage if they are truly eligible.

"TennCare is a complex program that faces serious challenges," Bredesen said. "Bringing costs under control will require major change. But it is only fair that people have every opportunity to prove they are eligible before they are permanently removed from the program."

The latest action follows claims by TennCare patients and advocates that there was confusion among some enrollees during last year's reverification process. That process was intended to identify and remove people who are not eligible for TennCare under tighter rules that went into effect July 1, 2002.

TennCare enrollees who lost their coverage because the state didn't hear from them on time can re-apply at their local Department of Human Services office. If they are determined to be eligible, coverage will be restored as of the date they reapply.

TennCare is the state's managed care health insurance program for over 1.3 million poor, disabled or uninsured Tennesseans. People who have questions about TennCare or need help with reverification should call the TennCare Information Line at 1-800-669-1851.

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